

# Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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## Seriously Donita

"I've always longed for people to take me more seriously. Unfortunately, they...assume that I cannot really act."

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## Celebrity PBB

Meet the celebrity housemates of the newest reincarnation of 'Pinoy Big Brother.'

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## Fil-Am eyes RP designer for Oscars

By RUBEN V. NEPALES  
INQUIRER

LOS ANGELES, California—"Are there any Filipino designers out there who would be interested in outfitting me?"

This was the answer of Pia Clemente—the first Filipino-American woman to receive an Oscar nomination in the 78-history of the Academy Awards—when the Inquirer asked the inevitable Hollywood awards season question, "Who will you be wearing?"

That is, on the red carpet at the Kodak Theatre on March 5. Clemente added, laughing, "That is the No. 1 question I get asked!"

She revealed, "I will start working with a stylist next week. It would be nice to find a Filipino designer."

The Philippine-born Clemente and Rob Pearlstein, as producer and writer-director, respectively, of "Our Time Is Up," were nominated in the Best Short Film, Live Action (as opposed to Animation) category.

In an e-mail interview, Clemente, whose family is from Bulacan province, narrated how she learned of the exciting news. When the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences released the list of nominations on Jan. 31, she was in the East Coast, visiting family. "Rob called me and said, 'We're in!' I was amazed and ecstatic."

Clemente thanked everyone who prayed for her film to get nominated, as

**FIL-AM Page 2**

# 10 days for stampede probe



Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, center, is escorted to his limousine upon arrival in a private jet at the Manila International Airport in Manila Thursday Feb. 9, 2006.

By TETCH TORRES  
INQUIREER

The four-man team of the Department of Justice has 10-days to complete its evaluation of a report submitted by an inter-agency fact-finding committee on the deadly stampede last Feb. 4, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said.

"The panel [will] evaluate the fact-finding investigation report on the 'Ultra incident' at Pasig City submitted to this department by DILG Undersecretary and Chairman Atty. Marius Corpus and determine whether there is sufficient basis to proceed with the conduct of a preliminary investigation on the basis of the documents submitted," Gonzalez said in a department order.

"For this purpose, the panel is directed to submit its findings within 10 days," Gonzalez said.

Senior State Prosecutor Joselita C. Mendoza heads the panel whose members include State Prosecutor Merba Waga, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) NCR Director Ruel M. Lasala, and Lawyer Arnold M. Rosales.

Gonzalez created a separate panel from the one headed by Senior State Prosecutor Leo

**10 DAYS Page 2**

## Gore: Earth now at risk

By DAXIM L. LUCAS  
INQUIREER

Warning that the world will reach the "tipping point" toward an ecological catastrophe within the next 10 years, former US Vice President Al Gore urged international and local leaders to focus their efforts toward halting the phenomenon of global warming.

Gore flew to Manila yesterday to address a group of several hundred political and business leaders as well as members of the diplomatic corps at the RCBC Plaza on Ayala Avenue in Makati City on the dangers of neglecting the environment.

"We should be worried about threats like terrorism, but we should also be worried about other more important threats like the destruction of the environment," he told the group which included former President Fidel V. Ramos and several senators and congressmen.

**GORE Page 2**



# PINOYNEWS

## Want to learn a new skill? Attend classes at POLO

**S**lots are still open for overseas Filipino workers and Filipino CNMI residents wanting to join the vocational training courses that will be offered this year at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

The training is in collaboration with the Philippine Consulate General.

Labor Representative Joan Lourdes Lavilla said seats are still available for the following training courses: Advanced Sewing, Basic Computer Operations, Automotive Troubleshooting

2, Advanced Nihonggo, and Peachtree Accounting 1.

Courses on Basic Sewing, Building and Fixing Computers, and Basic Nihonggo have already been filled. Lavilla said 18 students enrolled in the sewing course, while 37 have signed up for the basic Japanese Language class. Thirty-three individuals enrolled in the Building and Fixing Computers class.

For the Advanced Sewing class, Lavilla said students should have taken the Basic Sewing first before going to the advance class. For the Building and Fixing Computers course, the students

were required to take a Basic Computer Operations class before they could enroll in the advance class.

Automotive Troubleshooting 1 is a prerequisite course for those who would like to take the Automotive Troubleshooting 2. Basic Nihonggo course is also required for those who want to take the advance class, while Peachtree Accounting 1 class requires the students to take Basic Computer Operations first to understand the Peachtree Accounting software better.

Basic Sewing courses already started last Jan. 22 and will last until March 12.

The course is conducted every Sunday from 9am to 12pm. Building and Fixing Computers course also started last month, to end on March 18. The class is held every Sunday from 9am to noon. Another batch of the same course will be held on July 15 to Sept. 1 this year.

The Basic Nihonggo class began on Jan. 22 until March 22, with classes held on Sundays from 2pm to 5pm. Another session is scheduled on Oct. 8 to Nov. 26. The Advanced Sewing class will be held starting Oct. 8 to Nov. 26 from 9am to 12pm.

The Peachtree Accounting class is

scheduled on April 7 to May 26 but the dates are still subject for confirmation. The dates for the Automotive Troubleshooting 2 course and Advanced Nihonggo are still being arranged and will be announced soon, said Lavilla.

For more information on these courses, Filipino workers in the CNMI are encouraged to visit the POLO or OWWA offices at the ground floor of the Nauru Building in Susupe or call the offices at 235-3411 or 235-7658 or email them at polo\_Saipan@dole.gov.ph or polo@gtepacific.net. **(Marconi Calindas)**

### GORE

FROM PAGE 1

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo arrived and exchanged pleasantries with Gore but left before his presentation.

Gore served as vice president under former US President Bill Clinton from 1992 to 2000, using his post to advocate major scientific initiatives and environmental issues.

The standing-room only audience at the Carlos P. Romulo auditorium listened in rapt attention as Gore gave a science lecture on global warming complete with graphs, slides, video clips and satellite photos obtained from the National

Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) showing the extent of the environmental damage around the world.

In particular, Gore illustrated how the increase in carbon dioxide levels around the world was leading to higher temperatures worldwide, causing glaciers and the polar ice cap to melt.

He showed computer simulations of how major coastal cities around the world would be flooded by an average 5-meter rise in the sea level caused by melting polar ice.

"Two million people in Manila will have to be relocated," he said, as the simulation showed the northern and other low-lying areas of the metropolis being flooded as

Manila Bay rushed inland.

Gore's insights on issues such as global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer and the destruction of rainforests is said to have played a major role in policy-making for the Clinton government. In recent years, he strongly pushed for the passage of the Kyoto Treaty, an agreement among the world's major superpowers to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

During Gore's tenure as vice president, he was already a strong proponent for environmental protection. While a senator, he traveled around the world on numerous fact-finding missions to work on his book, "Earth in Balance: Ecology and

the Human Spirit," which explains the necessity for environmentalism and calls for a global marshal plan to rescue the planet from environmental disasters.

Gore also pointed out the threat to the environment brought about by population explosion, especially in the developing world which includes countries like the Philippines.

"We have to accept the moral reality," he said. "I know population is an issue here and I don't want to meddle but the biggest increases are happening in poor countries."

The population explosion is also causing the exploitation of valuable rainforests which, in turn, aggravates environmental

degradation.

"I said I wouldn't meddle, but you're losing 2 percent of your forests each year," he said. "They're more valuable to you for ecological purposes than for wood."

### And mining, too

"But that's for you to decide," he said. Gore also noted that the mining of minerals could also

destroy the environment.

"I hate to meddle, but the costs have to be calculated," he said, stressing that political will is the key toward implementing reforms on the environmental front.

"Fortunately, in democracies, political will is a renewable resource," he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

### 10 DAYS

FROM PAGE 1

Dacera to determine if the report submitted by the task force would be enough to pursue a case against those responsible.

If the documents are complete, Dacera's group will take over, Gonzalez said.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said if the documents were incomplete, the investigation on the tragedy would be turned over to the NBI for case build-up.

At least 74 people were killed and more than a hundred were injured at the PhilSports Arena (formerly ULTRA) last February 4 when a stampede erupted, as thousands were lined up to watch the first anniversary celebration of ABS-CBN's noon-time show "Wowowee."

A government fact-finding committee that investigated the tragedy found, among others, several network officials liable.

Eugenio Lopez III, ABS-CBN's chairman and chief executive officer, has claimed responsibility for the incident and that he will do so again "should our justice system so determine in the future."

He was outraged however at Interior and Local Government undersecretary Marius Corpus' strongly worded statement about how the station treated the crowd "like animals" by offering "slices of meat to a pack of hungry wolves."

At the same time, the network called for an impartial investigation.

Corpus clarified however that his statement was not part of the report that his committee submitted to the Department of Justice and apologized for the remark.

The Department of Justice has formed committees to investigate the incident further and has sought the help of the National Bureau of Investigation.

### FIL-AM

FROM PAGE 1

she had asked them earlier in an e-mail.

Four years ago, she line-produced the Filipino-American film, "The Debut," which starred Eddie Garcia, Tirso Cruz, Gina Alajar and Fil-Am actor Dante Basco.

Of her Oscar nod, Clemente—who moved to the United States with her family when she was 3 years old—wondered if she was indeed the first Fil-Am to be so cited. But first or not, she said, "I am proud to be part of history in this way. I take pride in my craft, and I am proud of my heritage."

The New Jersey-raised filmmaker has had a taste of an Oscar win. As a student of Barnard College, Columbia University, Clemente produced "Christmas

in New York," which won the 1977 Oscar for Dramatic Student Film.

This time around, when at last Clemente saw her name on the Academy's website, she almost cried. "It seemed like something that happened to other people, and here it was happening to me," she recounted.

The short film that made it happen for Clemente stars Kevin Pollack, whose credits include "Casino" and "The Usual Suspects," and Jorge Garcia of the current hit TV series, "Lost." It is a film about a therapist who, learning that he has six weeks to live, adopts a fresh approach to his method of treatment—brutal honesty.

Clemente said, laughing, "We had such a talented and funny cast." **(Ruben Nepales is a correspondent in Los Angeles for Philippine Daily Inquirer)**



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# Ang iyong karapatan bilang manggagawa sa CNMI

By **MARCONI CALINDAS**  
REPORTER

Ang mga alituntuning ito ay halaw sa isang lathalain ng CNMI Department of Labor na isinalin sa wikang Filipino sa pakikipagtulungan ng Philippine Overseas Labor Office at ng Konsulado ng Pilipinas sa CNMI.

Ang mga karapatan ng manggagawa ay ang mga sumusunod:

1. Ang manggagawa ay hindi maaaring pilitin na gumawa ng kahit anong gawain maliban sa mga bagay na nakasaad sa kanilang kontrata o “employment contract.”

2. Ang manggagawa ay may karapatan na itabi o dalhin ang kanilang pasaporte at “entry work permit” sa lahat ng oras.

3. Ang manggagawa ay may karapatang pumunta kahit saang lugar at gawin ang anumang kagustuhan kapag walang trabaho, maliban sa magtrabaho para sa ibang kumpanya o magtayo ng sariling negosyo.

4. Ang pinakamaliit na pasahod ay nasa halagang \$3.05 kada isang oras, maliban sa mga magsasaka, houseworker, mangingisda, mga marino at “golf caddies.”

5. Ang mga manggagawa na inatasang mamalagi sa kanilang barracks o nakatalagang tirahan, pumunta sa pagtitipon na may kinalaman sa trabaho, o inatasang pumunta sa lugar ng gawaan para sa kung ano mang dahilan, ay nararapat na mabigyan ng sahod para sa oras na iyon.

6. Walang kaltas sa sahod ang maaaring gawin para sa pabahay, pagkain o ano pa mang gastusin maliban na lamang kung ang mga ito ay nakasaad sa kontrata.

7. Ang manggagawa na

pinapasahod ng mas mababa sa minimum wage, kabilang ang mga magsasaka at katulong sa bahay, ay hindi maaaring singilin para sa pabahay at pagkain.

8. Ang manggagawa ay hindi maaaring pilitin tumira sa pabahay ng kanyang employer, bagkus ay maaaring tumira sa ibang lugar na kasama ang mga kaibigan o kapamilya.

9. Ang manggagawa ay may layang makipag-ugnayan sa Department of Labor para sa mga reklamo ukol sa kanilang sitwasyon sa trabaho, at may layang makakuha ng abogado at magsampa ng kaso laban sa kanyang employer.

10. Ang manggagawa na nagsampa ng kaso laban sa kanyang employer ay maaaring makakuha ng pansamantalang “permit” na makapagtrabaho o “temporary work authorization” upang siya ay makapaghanap ng ibang trabaho habang ang kanilang reklamo ay hinahanapan ng solusyon.

11. Ang manggagawa ay maaaring hindi pagbayarin ng Department of Labor ng \$20 na “filing fee” kapag siya ay nagsampa ng kaso tungkol sa kanyang trabaho, kung siya ay mapatunayang walang kakayanan sa pagbayad.

Ito ay ilang lamang sa mga dapat tandaan ng bawat Pilipinong manggagawa dito sa CNMI. Para sa karagdagang impormasyon, mangyaring tumawag lamang sa CNMI Department of Labor sa 236-0900, o sa CNMI Immigration Office sa 664-2341, 236-0920-23, 236-0968 o 236-0934, o ‘di kaya sa opisina ng Konsulado ng Pilipinas sa 234-1850-51, 235-3411, 235-6992 o 235 4749.

# Cruel boss shatters Filipina’s dream

By **Inquirer, Agence France-Presse**

**SINGAPORE**—Chona had long dreamed of this day.

On her parents’ small farm in the lush Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon, she had imagined traveling to a place like Hong Kong or Singapore.

And now, in April 2005, she had done it. Here she was in Singapore to begin a new phase of her life, working as a maid.

“I thought Singapore was a very nice place because I could see all the trees and it was very clean ... I’m happy because now my dream has come true, I said to myself,” Chona recalls.

But her dream job rapidly turned into a nightmare—one that bears a striking resemblance to the experiences of many other maids documented last year by New York-based Human Rights Watch in a report on Singapore’s domestic helpers.

Based on in-depth interviews with 65 maids of various nationalities, the rights watchdog said Singapore’s maids suffer abuses including physical and verbal aggression, threats, restrictions on movement, abuse by agents, exorbitant debt payments, long work hours and lack of rest days.

Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower called the report a gross exaggeration.

But Chona says she suffered all of it.

Trouble began the moment Chona—not her real name—met her Singaporean agent after being driven into the city from Changi Airport. The contract she had signed with an employment agency in Manila promised a salary of S\$350 (\$215) and at least two days

off every month, she says.

But the Singapore maid agent told her the salary would be S\$320 with no days off—for two years. Despite her surprise, Chona says she was afraid to say anything and felt compelled to sign on to those terms in order to work.

That was the first of many disappointments.

Rather than being taken directly to her employer’s house, she says she spent three days “training” at the Singaporean agent’s apartment.

“They didn’t treat us well,” says the tiny, short-haired Chona, 26. Although the apartment had separate bedrooms for the agent, her children, and their grandparents, Chona says she and 25 or 30 other Filipino and Indonesian maids slept in the kitchen.

“We slept like sardines,” she says.

They were among the roughly 150,000 maids who work in Singapore—and part of the hundreds of thousands of women from the region who serve as domestic helpers to families in wealthy Asian or Middle Eastern countries.

Chona says she was scolded for not closing the agent’s car door tightly enough. Another maid was slapped for a similar mistake, she says.

In a perverse way, this was training for what was to come.

‘Stupid maid, bloody maid’ After three nights there, the agent took Chona to a condominium where her new boss greeted her oddly.

“I want to see if you’re hard-working,” the woman said, touching Chona’s hand. “Then after that she made me turn three

times in front of my agent,” Chona says, her voice straining.

Softly, she adds: “She’s very fussy.”

Each room had to be cleaned with a different-colored cloth. When Chona mistakenly used the orange cloth in the kitchen, the woman became angry.

“Clean again!” she says she was ordered.

The woman, a stay-at-home mother whose husband Chona rarely saw, had two small children: a 5-year-old boy and 16-month-old girl. Chona cooked for the youngsters and their parents, washed and ironed the clothes and cleaned the apartment.

She tried, she says, to do her best.

Her days began at 5 a.m. and did not end until 19 hours later at midnight, she says.

A swirl of purple provides the only color to her black top and black pants that set the somber mood for the story she tells while holding a black bag tightly in her lap. Occasionally, Chona wipes tears from her eyes with a brown handkerchief.

“Stupid maid. Bloody maid. You’re worse than a little kid. Monkey!” Chona says she was repeatedly told. She was no different, the woman told her, from the eight other maids who had worked for her.

Chona, a Catholic, prayed that her employer would treat her differently.

Sundays were the only time Chona was allowed out—not for church, but to clean and cook at the home of her boss’ mother, she says.

“The first time my employer beat me there.”

Chona remembers well that morning in late May last year. “Because I forgot to cook the porridge for the baby.”

# Kin of OFWs stranded in Riyadh seek help

By **DESIREE CALUZA**  
INQUIRER

**BAGUIO CITY**—The parents of 15 overseas Filipino workers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, are asking the government to repatriate their daughters who are protesting their employers’ alleged human rights abuses and breach of their job contracts.

The workers, who came from Baguio, Benguet and La Union, started the protest in the first week of January this year. They have remained locked up at the rooftop of a

building in Riyadh.

They have been suffering from hunger, thirst and sickness for almost a month, Flora Belinan, spokesperson of Migrante-Cordillera, told a forum here.

Lydia Balawen, mother of one of the workers, said she received a letter from her daughter who complained about their condition at the rooftop of a building, which serves as the living quarters of the employees.

“My daughter said they are now running out of food because even the food donated by other OFWs is being blocked. The water

that they are drinking is not potable and it is very dirty. I and the other parents are always crying and having sleepless nights because we are thinking about their condition. They are all going to die there,” said Balawen.

The 15 workers accused their employer, the Annasban Group, of violating their job contracts. They applied as janitors at a mental hospital in Riyadh and were hired through two Manila-based recruitment agencies.

Belinan said the workers’ complaints included illegal pay deduction, non-payment of overtime pay and lack of food.

LABOR FRONT

Delayed wages

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
REPORTER

**Q: How do I deal with an employer who is not paying my wages on time?**

**A:** If your employer is not paying your full wages on time or is making unauthorized wage deductions, the best thing to do is to first discuss the problem with your employer. If the problem is not resolved, you may contact the Division of Labor (236-0960 to 0967). You should either call or go to Labor and tell them your problems with your employer. An investigator will entertain your complaints and assist you as to what you should do next. It is advisable that you prepare a written statement containing your name, passport number, employer, nature of complaint, and contact number.

**Q: How soon should I file a labor complaint?**

**A:** To ensure that your complaint will be legally considered, you should file it before a six-month period ends. The law sets a statute of limitations of six months on the filing of a labor complaint.

**Q: Can an employer deduct from an employee \$125 for housing and \$125 for food monthly?**

**A:** No. The maximum deduction for housing is \$100 per month, while the maximum deduction for food is \$100 monthly. Many employers agree to provide housing and food benefits in the employment contract. The employer can deduct the cost of housing and food, provided that the employment contract allows for such deductions. Deductions should be approved by the Labor director.



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# PINOYSTYLE

## DOJ lets Velasquez off taxman's hook

By **ARMAND N. NOCUM**  
INQUIRER

**S**heer technicality. This was how songbird Regine Velasquez avoided becoming a jailbird in the multi-million tax evasion case the BIR filed against her last year.

In a nine-page decision released to the media yesterday, Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutors said the failure of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to send notice to Velasquez before filing the case in April effectively cleared her of the offense.

"In sum, complainant's (BIR) allegation that respondent (Velasquez) willfully attempted to evade or defeat payment of tax and/or failure to supply correct and accurate information has no basis ... thus, necessitating the dismissal of the present complaint," the DOJ said.

In a decision penned by state prosecutor Roseanne Elepaño-Balauag and assistant chief state prosecutor Miguel Gudio, the DOJ said the "notice to (the) taxpayers came too late to be apt."

The prosecutors stressed that any shortcut in the legal procedure "cannot be countenanced."

"Be it noted that the notice and demand are requirements of due process to which every taxpayer is entitled," the DOJ said of the need for the BIR to notify the respondent of her tax liabilities to give her a chance to explain and submit evidence in her favor prior to filing of the case.

In its complaint, the BIR said Velasquez did not pay taxes from her earnings as product endorser of Nestlé-Philippines, among others in 2003.

Velasquez is also the endorser of the Department of Tourism and Smart Communications' tourism promotion program, KFC, Wendy's, Digitel, Lux and Nokia.

## Portraits of a Valentine vixen

By **JENNI EPPERSON**  
INQUIRER

Beyond roses and rows of chocolate-covered cherries, real romance sparks from a black lace bra peeking out of the blouse, invisible panty lines, wearing nothing else but your husband's white button-down shirt, or better yet just a whiff of his favorite perfume (okay boys, you may drool now).

When serving or being served, never forget those subtle nuances—a wink, a slight tap on the lap or a naughty grin, signals the start of an estrogen-induced battle (growl). The rush comes in when you know that the prey has fallen for your bait,

and then you go for the kill knowing you have testosterone Tommy in your hands.

The rules of seduction have changed. The power to absorb, acquire, accumulate is upon us just like the memoirs of the blue-eyed geisha, "We must learn how stop a man in his tracks with one look... " and be able to keep them, here's how:

- Get stoned. While heirloom pieces given by your hubby are to be cherished and should be displayed at all times, for the va-va-voom night, leave the real jewels inside the safe and bring out your lovely body jewels instead —crème brûlée body cream, glittery oil and Swarovski skull tattoos rule.

- Role-play. You've exhausted your role as domestic diva; this time, wear a different hat (a feathered one perhaps?); try playing a naughty French maid, a tarty girl Friday or the all-time favorite, schoolgirl slut.

- To tease is to please. A hint of lace, a

touch of leather or an animal-print camisole under your power suit will drive any man crazy.

- Skin is in. Revealing décolleté tops, backless black dress or just a sliver of silk bed sheet on top of your naked body will make any lover caress you until the morning after.

- Hot teddy. Dusters, old college T-shirts and loose underwear have no place inside a lover's lair. Teddies, naughty nighties and jaw-dropping lingerie are the ones that get a standing ovation (wink, wink).

So "legal wives," "number ones," "certified girlfriends," romance your partners this Valentine's Day with the help of your inner mistress. Surrender and play dress-up. Unleash the hampered soul of a love lady who dresses to please because wearing your leopard-print Natori teddy with your Gucci DMH (Do Me Heels) has never felt this good!

## Six celebrities reveal what they did for love

By **DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL**  
INQUIRER

Even after the "Wowowee" tragedy, Valentine-crazy Pinoys will still flock to jam-packed V-day concerts lined up for the whole month. Let's just hope that the red-letter day doesn't turn into a red alert day. Be that as it may, the romantic fool in me couldn't help cornering some stars for their Valentine thoughts. I asked them about the craziest thing they did for love. My own outrageous l'amour anecdotes are too many to mention. But just to get the ball rolling and the heart fluttering ...

Once I waited for my BF (now ex) to come home after we had a terrible fight. For maximum impact, I laid down in front of their gate. He almost ran me over!

Now it's the stars' turn to get silly and mushy. Valentine's gives us all the perfect excuse to be that way, 'huh?

Ruffa Mae Quinto: I'm a martyr when I'm in love. The first time I cried on TV because I was so hurt and didn't care what people would say, was the pinakabaliw thing that I did because of love.

Ogie Alcasid: Traveling for two days straight due to flight delays just to be with my love is the most insane thing I ever did.

Asia Agcaoili: I enrolled my boyfriend in a good university and paid for everything in the hope of having a bright future with him but we didn't end up together. What could be crazier than that?

Mark Herras: When I was still with Jennylyn [Mercado], I filled up her whole house with rose petals on our anniversary.

Maegan Aguilar: Shuttling between Munich and Manila many times over all in the



name of love.

Juris Fernandez (MYMP): Let's just say that I have fallen head over heels in love so many times—when will I ever learn?

### Christine & Mark?

Pampanga governor Mark Lapid was Christine Reyes' special guest during her 17th bday bash. He gave her lechon and a bottle of Patron tequila. I asked Christine if she thinks Mark is boyfriend material. She smiled and said, "Oh yeah! He's nice, not just to me, but to everybody. We're both adventurous kaya click kami!"

Will love be their next adventure? Hope-

fully it won't be a misadventure if her sis, Ara Mina, puts her foot down again (like she did about Keempee de Leon on account of age difference. "Age doesn't matter" or "Sister knows best?") Pick the correct answer, birthday girl!

### FrancisM's sentiments

In the aftermath of the "Wowowee" incident, ever wonder how people from the other side of the fence—GMA 7's "Eat Bulaga"—are dealing with it? I asked my "forever young" FrancisM (one of "Bulaga's" hosts) about his sentiments. He sighed and replied, "All of us over here at 'Eat Bulaga' felt very sad. We prayed before the show started on Saturday. It's just too bad that, I think, there was lack of security. That whole tragedy was preventable. It wasn't force majeure. If a million pesos was at stake, what's a few hundred thousands thrown in for extra security, communications, policemen, crash barricades and bouncers? I am familiar with stampedes because they almost always happen in rock concerts."

I can almost hear Kiko rapping, "Impede stampede! Stomp, stomp it out!"

### Candy's back

After being away from the limelight for a while, top comedienne Candy Pangilinan is back—and looking for a Valentine. Known for her razor sharp wit and hilarious interpretations, Candy is set to take the Music Museum by storm on Feb. 15 via her comedy concert, "Candy's be Love?" She will perform several side-splitting sketches of women in their quest for true love. Tickets at the gate.

### DOLLYWOOD:

## When euphoria turns into grief

By **DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL**  
INQUIRER

**A**fter the nationwide jubilation over Manny Pacquiao's victory comes immense gloom brought about by the "Wowowee" tragedy. What a way to mark the game show's first anniversary! National euphoria turned into grief.

I have a soft spot for Willie Revillame's show because it paved the way for my son IC's show biz comeback. It was in "Wowowee" that IC first appeared after a long absence from the scene. How could a show that gives hope to the hopeless turn out this way? Nobody is to be blamed, but there are lessons to be learned from the tragic event.

- For entertainers like Willie and company, their job is to give the audience a good show. In the absence of heroes, the "masa" tend to create one. So they cling to their boob tube favorites and everything their idol stands for. "Wowowee" fanatics held on to the promise of a better life. It's ironic that it's this very hope that caused them their life. Perhaps TV shows should stop too much drumbeating so as to avoid mass hysteria. Keep it simple. Keep it real. Don't let the ratings game drive you to extremes.

- For viewers, although there's nothing wrong with pinning your hopes on a game show, you must also remember the value of hard-earned money. Instead of lining up for days just to get inside the studio, why not try queueing up for a job interview?

A game show must be fun fun fun. When it centers on fund, fund, fund, desperation comes in. Don't be idle and succumb to TV idolatry.

- The "WAWAwee" catastrophe is a sad, sad indication of how tough life is for most Pinoys. Times are so bad that we grab on to the slightest chance of becoming instant millionaires. To think the "Wowowee" Tragedy happened on the same day that Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition was supposed to be launched (the launch was postponed). Both shows have millions at stake. But while the masa have to endure fatigue and hunger for a crack at the jackpot, all the housemates have to do is to follow Big Brother's rules. Are TV shows sending the wrong signals for the right reasons, or the right signals for the wrong reasons?

### Lovers' quarrel?

ROXANNE Guinoo and Joross Gamboa were spotted strolling in Greenbelt 3. They were obviously having a lover's quarrel. Roxanne was blabbering, but Joross was quiet. He probably didn't want to create a scene. She seemed really pissed, and eventually walked away and left him behind, much to the bewilderment of the curious onlookers. Were the lovers lost in the Valentine shuffle or shuffling with lost hearts?

### Heartsongs

ON FEB 10 and 11, the R & B Prince and Princess—Jay-R and Kyla—bring their trademark swoon music onstage via the must-see Valentine concert "Heartsongs," a GMA Network concert production, at the Aliw Theater. Joining them are Jennylyn Mercado, Yasmien Kurdi, Rainier Castillo, Jonalyn Viray and Brenan Espartinez. Aside from the soulful music, they will present touching testimonials of celebrity and non-celebrity couples on their unforgettable true to life love stories. Tickets available at all SM-Ticketnet outlets.

### 'Hearts in Season'

CATCH the three divas of the '80s—Janet Basco, Ivy Violan and Dulce—together for the first time on the concert stage, with newcomers George Tagle and Miguel Castro in One Production House's "Hearts in Season," Feb 13, Manila Peninsula Rigodon Ballroom, with Toti Fuentes as musical director. Dulce, Ivy and Janet are out to reclaim their thrones in the concert scene. Their immense talents are legendary.

Miguel is a theater actor who got good reviews as the lead in "St. Louis Loves dem Filipinos...the Musical." George is a painter/classical singer.

### Icon 6

GET a copy of the avant-garde mag, Icon 6 (Fresh), with Andrew Wolf on the cover. Thanks to the staff, especially to associate editor Angelo Morales and ace fotog Raymund Isaac for their wonderful feature on my hija, IC Mendoza.

(E-mail [wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com](mailto:wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com))



"I've always longed for people to take me more seriously. Unfortunately, they associate Donita Rose with being a horrible Tagalog speaker. They assume that I cannot really act."

# A serious . Donita Rose

This was the lament of the Singapore-based actress and MTV VJ, who visited the Inquirer recently. She is in Manila working on the international film, "Seed of Contention." She still speaks in English here, but hopes to prove that inability to speak fluent Tagalog "does not make me less of an actress."

"Seed of Contention" is being produced and directed by Donita's friend, Ana Marie Laperal, for the Hollywood-based outfit, Leaudouce Films. The movie is a love story based on the life of Laperal's maternal grandmother and is set during World War II.

## Whose idea was it to make this movie?

**Ana:** Mine, I suppose. I wrote the script in 2000, before I met Donita. I mentioned it to her in passing because I had no immediate plans for it.

## You said yes before reading the script?

**Donita:** Yeah. We didn't discuss details. I just said, "Yes, I'll be in that film," thinking I was doing her a favor. (Laughter)

## So you like the role.

**Ana:** It is a great part. I don't think Donita has done anything like this.

**Donita:** I'll be playing Emma. I get to speak in English. The first international film I did was "Legacy." I was a lot more confident at the time but I was a little intimidated by my co-actors. I felt I could've done a better job. Being that I'm not a teenager anymore and a lot more mature, I feel that what you're going to see is the real me.

## How are you preparing for the role?

**Donita:** I've read the script twice. My main concern is not so much the difficult scenes but the fact that I have to speak with a slight Spanish accent.

**Ana:** Which, if I may add, is not absolutely intrinsic to her part. But I love the fact that she's going to give it a shot—just goes to show what a dedicated actor she is.

**Donita:** I'll be dying my hair black and I'm working hard at losing weight. I'm working out six days a week at the gym.

## Didn't you ever take Tagalog lessons?

**Donita:** No. When I was growing up, I could speak Panggalatok fluently. I felt that if I could speak that dialect fluently, why should Tagalog be a challenge? When I was growing up, all the members of my family spoke Panggalatok and English. My mom used to be a schoolteacher. No one ever spoke Tagalog. I started speaking Tagalog

only when I came to Manila.

## How different is working on an international film like "Legacy" from working on a local movie?

**Donita:** The immediate differences that I noticed were of course that everybody is speaking in English and that there's live sound. I think we use live sound now in many local films, but back then it was those cameras that when you roll walang sound masyado. In terms of work ethics, I can say that Filipinos are as hard working as Americans.

Now, if you want to talk about this film as opposed to this woman (Laperal), she's very particular, very detailed in everything she does. You should see her marked script.

**Ana:** I have every shot pretty laid out—coverage, camera angles and such.

**Donita:** We'll be flying in actors from Singapore, Los Angeles, crew from Italy and France.

## Will you be having local actors?

**Ana:** Certainly. In fact, 90 percent of our crew is local. Our camera team, they're world-class. I have no hesitation in saying that. Our camera operator's last film was "Munich," directed by Steven Spielberg. I was telling Donita, "From Spielberg to me. What's wrong with that picture?" For a first-time feature director like me, it's very important to be surrounded by people who are experienced.

**Donita:** What I love about Anna is that she could have filmed this movie in Guam, Canada or anywhere else where she could get tax breaks but she chose to do it here. Whenever I get asked what my future dreams and goals are, I'd always say I would really like to be in more international films, not just for myself, of course it's something that's very prestigious, but just to let people know that hey, we've got world-class talents here in the Philippines.

## How do you describe Emma, your character?

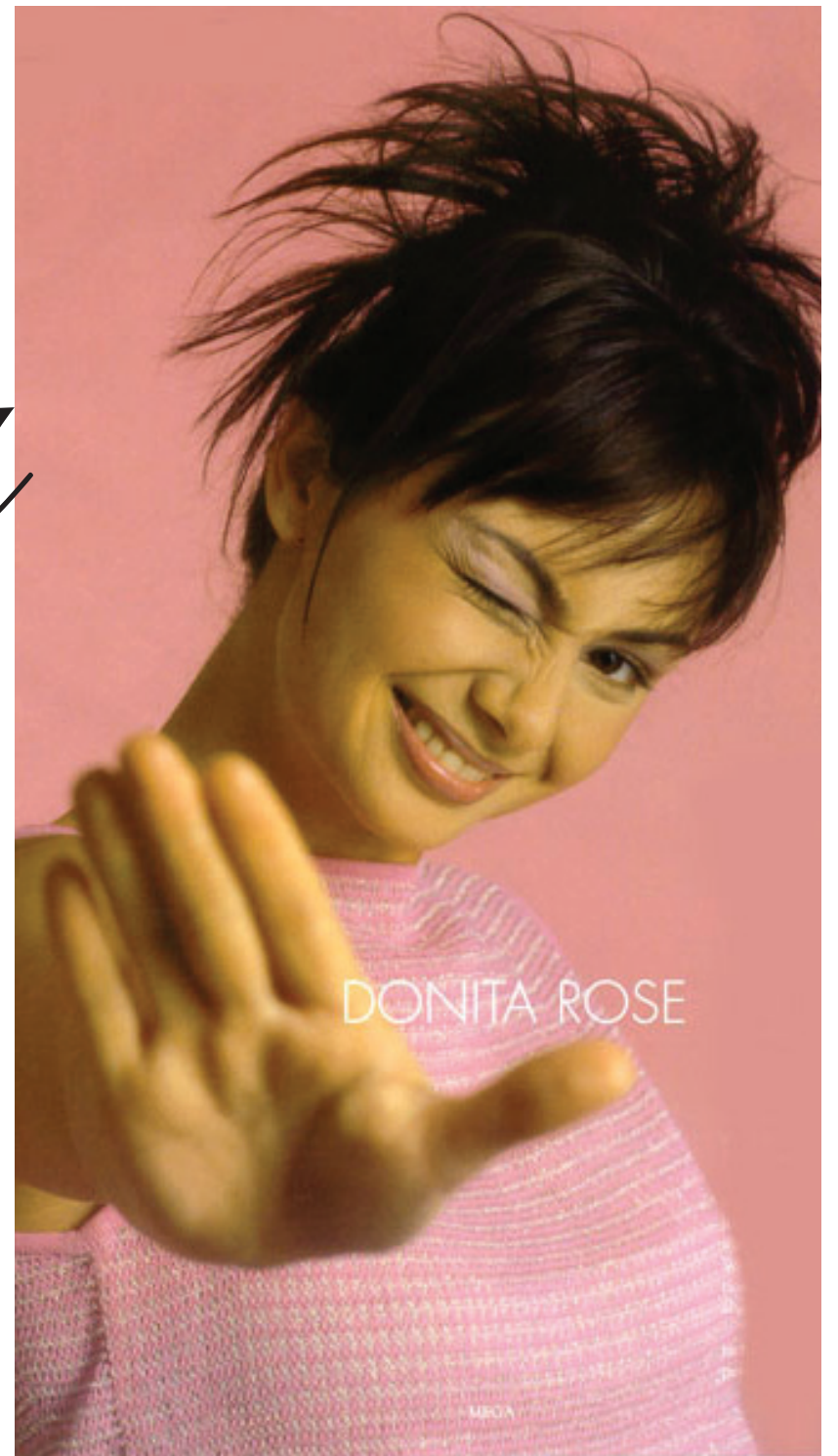
**Donita:** She's nothing like what I am in real life. Emma's character is strong. She comes across as the kontribida [but] she's just misunderstood.

**Ana:** She's a rather stern and severe character. Of course, she will undergo a transformation. I especially like Emma. In fact, she utters some of my favorite lines in the entire script.

## How have you matured as an ac-

## tress?

**Donita:** I'd have to say that I've been through so much, being 31 now. If I wasn't pressured to do anything right now and you tell me, "Let's see if you could cry," that would be really easy. I could just internalize, think of something and then cry. But sometimes there are other factors involved, like the way we film here—sometimes your crying scene is scheduled at 5:30 a.m. and you need to hurry before the sun comes up. You're tired, you're stomach is sour, and then the director shouts, "Quiet on the set!" You go, "Shucks, everybody is looking at me." But I'd say that I'm a little more prepared now, especially because I've had more experiences to help me.



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# Meet the celebrity housemates of 'Pinoy Big Brother'

By **NINI VALERA**  
INQUIRER

Even before the 14 celebrity housemates of the reality TV show "Pinoy Big Brother"—aired over ABS-CBN—could be introduced to the public last night, one housemate, Rico Robles, a deejay for RX radio, already faced eviction.

Inquirer Entertainment learned yesterday from PBB unit manager and director Lauren Dyogi that Robles had violated his contract with PBB when he renewed his contract with RX radio.

But Dyogi and business unit head Linggit Tan gave Robles a chance to retrieve his contract with RX and to produce a certification that said the contract was null and void.

At 9pm yesterday, RX finally faxed a copy of the contract releasing Robles from the station.

Thus, Robles remained a housemate and was able to join yesterday's launch of the "PBB Celebrity Edition" at the Baywalk on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

He would have been replaced with another housemate, who would be brought to the PBB house next Saturday as part of that day's telecast.

Dyogi and Tan had given Robles until 7pm last night to produce the documents which Robles finally complied with.

And so there were still 14.

The other celebrity housemates are sexy actresses Aleck Bovick and Keanna Reeves; actors John Pratts, Rustom Padilla and Christian Vasquez; one-legged triathlon athlete Rudy Fernandez and Karetado gold medalist Gretchen Malalad; television hosts Angela Calina and Bianca Gonzales; singer Roxanne Barcelo; musician Eroll "Budoy" Marabiles; fashion designer Mich Dulce; and Bench underwear model Zanjoe Marudo.

The list of housemates had been a closely guarded secret of the PBB production staff and was finalized on Friday night. Not even high-ranking executives of ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. knew the housemates' identities.

The "PBB Celebrity Edition" should have been launched on Saturday but it was postponed to the next day because of the "Wowowee" stampede at the PhilSports Arena in Pasig City.

Inquirer Entertainment was at the Grand Boulevard Hotel when the housemates

started checking in on Friday. They had been stripped of their cell phones and were not allowed to leave their rooms which were also stripped of telephone and TV set.

"I will miss my kids most," confessed Vasquez, who maintains a long distance relationship with his sons who live with his mother in Iloilo province. "I usually call them on the cell every night, and we say our prayers together. Now, I can't even do that."

Bovick admitted that she would miss her lover, actor Maceda. "I'll miss having sex, sure," she said in Filipino. "But that's okay."

"Y-Speak" host Gonzales said she wouldn't miss boyfriend director Lino Cayetano as much as she would miss her family. She also said she would miss her cell phone.

Marudo said he would miss going to the malls and being with his family and friends. "I'd probably quit if it gets to me," he confessed.

For Barcelo, quitting was not an option. "I joined the contest to win," declared the singer, who also made it to the finals of a Hollywood talent search show.

Her sense of adventure would keep Calina, ABS-CBN Cebu talk show host, in the show. "This is something new for me," she said. "But I'd miss my daughter Aira most."

Reeves was looking forward to the solace of being holed up in the PBB house. "I am also looking forward to the P1-million cash that I might win," she admitted.

Pratts tried to get some much-needed sleep as soon as he entered his room at about 7 p.m. Friday. "I haven't slept since Monday," he said.

Pratts had to finish all his

commitments first before entering the PBB house.

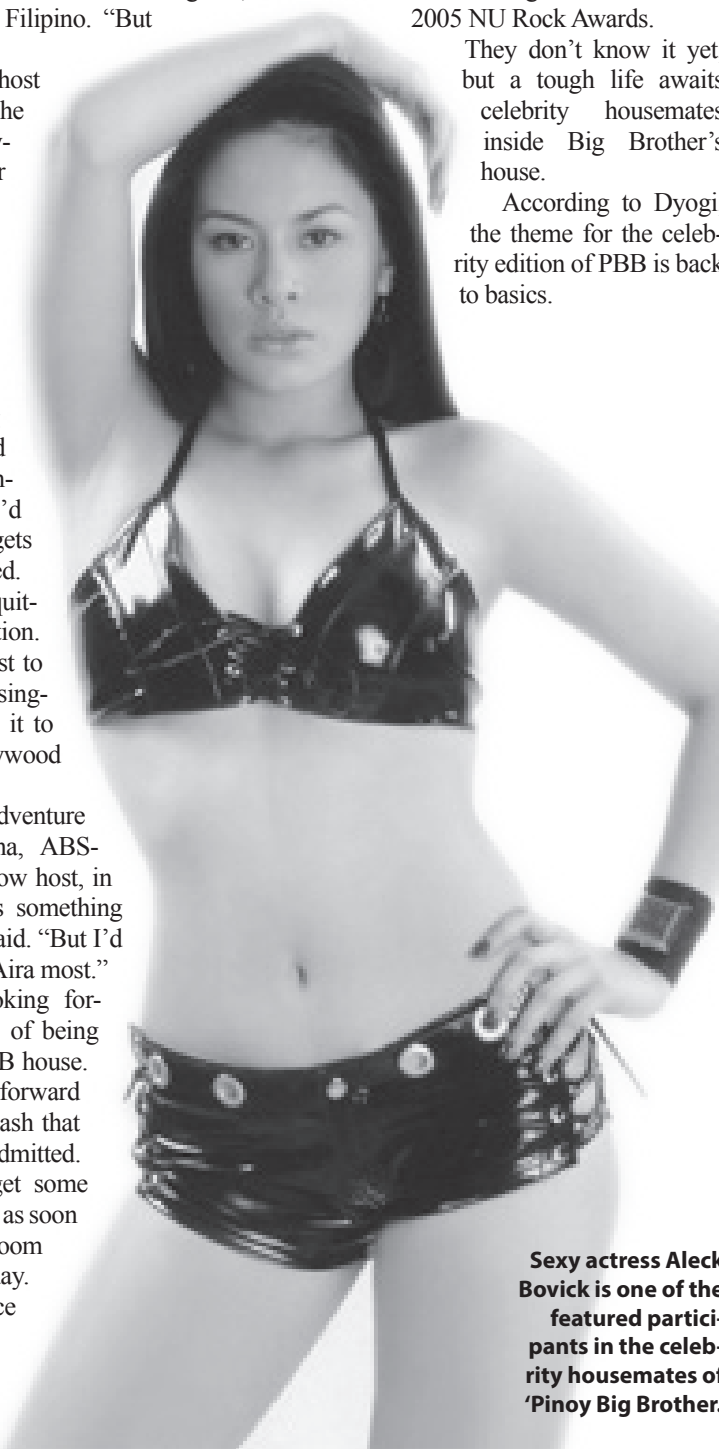
Fashion designer and Store for All Seasons co-owner Dulce also lacked sleep. She had to stay up most of Friday night to finish hats a customer had ordered from her.

Marabiles planned on reading a book on how to preserve indigenous culture, his own advocacy for Samar province.

"We have a rich tradition and I want to preserve that," said the front man of the reggae band Jr. Kilat, whose song, "M-16," was named Song of the Year in the 2005 NU Rock Awards.

They don't know it yet, but a tough life awaits celebrity housemates inside Big Brother's house.

According to Dyogi, the theme for the celebrity edition of PBB is back to basics.



**Sexy actress Aleck Bovick is one of the featured participants in the celebrity housemates of 'Pinoy Big Brother.'**

## From hotel bed to 'papag' and 'banig'

By **NINI VALERA**  
INQUIRER

Before they entered what would be their "back-to-basics" address for 45 days, participants in the reality TV show "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition" stayed in a hotel—each to his/her own room.

On Sunday night, when it was time for them to be introduced to the public, the 14 new housemates, including RX deejay Rico Robles—who was almost "evicted" even before he could enter the Big Brother's house because of a glitch in his contract—were blindfolded, hooded, and escorted by uniformed guards from the Grand Boulevard Hotel on Roxas Boulevard to waiting vans outside.

A short ride brought the group to the Army and Navy Club, where they boarded a yacht. After a while they were stripped of hoods and blindfolds and transported by speed boat to Baywalk Manila on Roxas Boulevard, where the launch would be held and telecast live [over ABS-CBN].

As they went onstage, the celebrity participants were escorted by PBB's first-season housemates.

First to go up was Rudy Fernandez, called the Man of Steel of Asia because of his mechanical right leg. Ex-housemate Jenny Suico accompanied him.

Fernandez, 58, a triathlon athlete, lit a torch that apparently symbolized his excellence in athletics despite his handicap. His three sons, Spitz, Fritz and Ritz joined him on stage and wished him well.

A street dance production number welcomed housemate Bianca Gonzalez. She cried when a video message from her brother, TV host JC Gonzales, who was in the US, was played.

The most applauded of the celebrity housemates was John Pratts, who brought the house down with another dance number with his dad Donnie, plus Mico Aytona, Aiza Marquez, Glaiza de Castro and Theo Barros.

Housemate Angela Calina sang her favorite song, "Wildflower," with Side A's Joey Generoso. Her daughter, Aira, was onstage.

RX deejay Rico Robles performed a hip-hop and rap number with deejay Shorty. Rico was visibly shaken when the next housemate, Roxanne Barcelo, with whom he said he had a previous understanding, was introduced.

Budoy Marabiles, front man of the indie reggae band Junior Kilat, showed the audience why he is idolized in the Visayas, especially Cebu. Budoy rapped/sang Orange and Lemons' "Pinoy Ako" in Waray, sprinkling his act with comedy by pulling host Toni Gonzaga into a dance routine that required him to hold her around the waist.

A fashion show heralded the arrival of fashion designer Mich Dulce, who is also the vocalist of the all-girl bands "Death by Tampon" and "If Disco is a Crime."

Another fashion show welcomed Bench model Zanjoe Marudo, who spoke by phone patch with his father Zosimo, a chef in New Jersey. The six-foot hunk wept with joy.

Triple gold medal SEA Games winner Gretchen Malalad was next introduced to the crowd, estimated at 15,000 by ABS-CBN head of security Rene Luspo.

Keanna Reeves could barely control her tears when stand-up comics Chokoleit and John Lapuz welcomed—and then bade her goodbye.

For returning celeb Rustom Padilla, facing the huge crowd at the Baywalk was a poignant reminder of his once much-envied stardom. "Yes," Rustom said, "I'm ready to fall in love inside the house."

## George Clooney now gets a lot of respect

The 2005 Academy Awards won't be handed out until next month, but this early, the Oscars bid fair to be George Clooney's show. The movie hunk impressed the socks off everybody when he won three nominations for "Good Night and Good Luck," which he directed and co-wrote, and for his supporting performance in "Syriana."

Instructively enough, both films associated with Clooney have strong political content, proof positive that People magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive" has gone way beyond his hunky start on TV and the movies.

"Good Night" dramatizes the role of media in a nation's life, and hits at threats against civil liberties, while "Syriana" explores the United States' intrusion in other countries' internal affairs.

Thus, Clooney now paces other political activ-



By **NESTOR TORRE**  
INQUIRER

ists in using cinema to ask and answer some important and controversial questions that other filmmakers are afraid to touch.

We trust that both film people and viewers will be giving Clooney more respect from here on in! At age 44, Clooney must be breathing a sigh of relief that he now has a new, more substantial career thrust to pursue—and can give his old Hollywood Hunk image a good, long rest!

Another upbeat effect of the 2005 Oscar nominations announcement is the fact that it speeded up the local release of some productions.

For instance, "Walk the Line," which features the Oscar-nominated lead performances of Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon as Johnny Cash and June Carter, respectively, has opened in theaters here.

And Steven Spielberg's "Munich" opened yesterday, the better for local viewers to see if they agree or disagree with the US Academy that it's one of the five best movies of 2005.

Incidentally, Spielberg's movie also scores high marks in the political or political terrorism arena, because it's about the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Now, if only "Brokeback Mountain" and "Good Night and Good Luck" could also be rushed to our

screens as soon as possible—and maybe "Crash" could be shown again—so local film buffs can participate more actively in discussions leading up to the Oscar awards next month.

Finally, we are excited to hear that the 2005 Oscar ceremonies will be hosted for the first time by Jon Stewart. The political satirist and pundit is a hoot on TV, so we hope that he'll score a direct hit in the Oscars, as well.

It's quite appropriate that Stewart is hosting this year's awards show, because of the relatively high political content of the entries. So, just watch him go to town with his smoking salvos.

But, when push comes to shove, he'll have to do anything and everything else to keep the show humming along, so he can get good marks when he's compared to the awards' best host to date, Billy Crystal.



# OPINYON

## 'Dangal'

I like this group Karangalan. Its members had another successful gathering at the Cultural Center of the Philippines last Friday and Saturday, and I couldn't be happier for them. I like them for a couple of reasons.

The first is that they are a group that highlights what is normally deemed "positive" in our lives. As Nicky Perlas, Panjee Lopez and several others explained on TV late last week, Karangalan wants to dispel the culture of defeatism and cynicism by showing the depth of talent and accomplishment that rosters in these parts, if only we would have the eyes to see them. It is not PR, it is truth. There is reason to hope, not by recourse to self-hypnotism but by feeling the vibrancy that beats at the heart of this country.

Nicky himself explains this best in his invitation to Karangalan: "Recall the recent example of a 12-year-old student who returned P300,000. How is it that Cristina Bugayong escaped the deadly influence of a culture perceived to be suffering from an epidemic of greed and corruption? Only a journey to the 'Other Philippines' will reveal to you the answer. Cristina is a citizen of the 'Other Philippines,' visible only to eyes that can see subtle connections and hidden patterns. This is the Philippines of vision, moral courage, compassion, competence, and achievement. And she is not alone. Dozens of artists, entrepreneurs, journalists, executives, athletes and other Filipinos have gotten global awards for their achievements. And, unknown to most, thousands more exemplify lives of moral courage and practical achievements. May dangal ang Pinoy!" (The Filipino is honorable!)

The second, and probably more important, reason I like them is that the prime movers of Karangalan are also members of Pagasa who are opposed to the existence of an illegitimate president. Their position, in fact, is to hold elections as soon as possible sans Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, which presumes removing her first, though—if I know Nicky et al. completely—constitution-

ally. Clearly, their concept of creating a moral universe, or bringing to the fore what is good and decent in the current one, is not opposed to the concept of defeating an immoral one, or fighting what is rotten and indecent in the world we find ourselves in. They go hand-in-hand.

It's a good reminder to those who keep asking us to forget that we have a President who called up Garci with the express purpose of manipulating the results, and to move on from there. It is a timely reminder to those who keep saying they are fed up with politics, let's concentrate on the "positive" aspects of our lives and ignore everything else. It's a powerful reminder to those who talk of the "other Philippines" as though it exists apart

the wrongheaded perception of what is "positive" and "negative." It presupposes that every criticism, every contradiction, every negation is negative, and every praise, every acquiescence, every affirmation is "positive." Nothing can be farther from the truth. Praising, embracing and affirming the dictatorial rule of Marcos is not positive, it is negative in the extreme. Praising, embracing and affirming the illegitimate rule of GMA is not positive, it is negative in the extreme. Ignoring tyranny and injustice altogether and



### There's The Rub

By CONRADO DE QUIROS  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

"Other Philippines," the men and women who are loudly or silently fighting to remedy injustice and remove tyranny from this country, the men and women who are resolutely politically and righteously angrily struggling to rid this land of its scourge. They are part of what is positive. They show that this country has not become so

cynical it has stopped believing in goodness and decency, in justice and rightness, it now believes only in turning a blind eye to their obliteration. Fighting evil is not negative, it is positive in the extreme.

True, not all of those fighting GMA are honorable or marangal. Some are opportunists, some are absolute blackguards. None of that detracts from the imperative to end an illegitimate rule. None of that sullies the nobility of standing up against it. All it does is compel us to be a little more discriminate and pick out the good eggs from the bad, the marangal (honorable) from the tuso (opportunists), the positive from the negative.

What a felicitous word "karangalan." The group couldn't have found a better name. "Dangal" is not so easy to translate into English. It doesn't just mean honor, it also means pride, purity of heart, nobility. It is the perfect word for a perfect cause. It is a cause that calls on us to change ourselves as much as the world around us. It is a cause that calls on us to build a just and moral world as much as a rich and prosperous one. It is a cause that calls on us to buckle down to the tasks of the present even as we dream of a better future. The internal and the external, the political and the moral, the struggle to rid and the struggle to build: They are not two separate worlds, they are the two sides of a coin.

Pride and honor and nobility have never been inimical to progress. They are the foundations of it.

**It's a good reminder to those who keep asking us to forget that we have a President who called up Garci with the express purpose of manipulating the results, and to move on from there. It is a timely reminder to those who keep saying they are fed up with politics, let's concentrate on the "positive" aspects of our lives and ignore everything else.**

from the one we immediately apprehend, the one that has GMA (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) and the Lakas trapos dominating it.

I've read too many letters to the editor and articles that say a lot of good things are happening in this country, it's time we dwelled on them and not on the political static that is derailing us from progress. It's a wrongheaded idea based on

dwelling instead on the "success stories" is not positive, it is negative in the extreme. It does not push progress along, it derails it.

I'm all for dwelling on the positive aspect of life in this country. I'm all for pushing for the "Other Philippines." But like Karangalan, I'm all for including among the positive aspects of life in this country, among the things that make up the

## What games are the military playing?

I don't know what kind of games the military is or has been playing. But whatever they are, they can't be good for us ordinary mortals or, for that matter, the country. Moreover, they don't reflect well on the military itself.

Item: The military intelligence service has been neck-deep in the wiretapping of persons, both in government and in the opposition, who cannot, even under the most contorted of mental gymnastics, be considered to be military or national security risks. Which means it either decided to get involved in partisan political activities or allowed itself to be used for private gain. There has surely been abuse of authority here, and yet those who are responsible still have not been identified after six months of supposed investigation, much less charged, if only with "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

Item: The Oakwood Mutiny took place in July 2003. The depredations of Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia came to light in January 2005

(one and a half years later). The court martial of Garcia has been completed and he has been found guilty of "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" and sentenced to two years of hard labor, which, we are told, consists of sweeping his environs. But the court martial of the officers

involved in the 2003 mutiny, who are also charged with "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman," has still not been completed. Question: How difficult is it to decide that someone's conduct is unbecoming, which presumably can range from palming a CD from a store to stealing close to half a billion pesos? Does the difficulty lie with the officer part, or the gentleman part?

And whatever happened to the generals and officers responsible for the bankruptcy of the Armed Forces' pension fund and the loss of hundreds of millions of pesos belonging to soldiers? One thing's sure: No one has been subjected to court-martial proceedings (or criminal prosecution for those already retired). I guess what they did is considered conduct becoming officers and gentlemen.

Item: The four recent "escapees" were granted bail by the Makati City Regional Trial Court, as were reportedly (information supplied by lawyers Teddy Te and Rene Saguisag) all the 31 officers involved in the Oakwood mutiny,

except for the three considered to be the ringleaders (Antonio Trillanes, Milo Maestrecampo, Gerardo Gambala). Which means that these "escapees" should have been free on bail to begin with. Why were they still in military custody? Because, my informants say, that was the desire of the AFP



By SOLITA COLLAS-MONSOD  
INQUIRER

chiefs of staff (Efren Abu and Generoso Senga). Te said that while court-martial charges were filed against these "escapees,"

they were subsequently withdrawn—and then reinstated when the RTC allowed them to go free on bail. In other words, they were incarcerated not by order of a civilian court but by military order.

Item: One of the "escapees"—Lt. Lawrence San Juan—apparently had already "escaped" (this information came from Mike Enriquez's field reporter on radio dzBB) over the Christmas holidays, but came back after New Year, without publicity. Which could mean that he came back so that he could escape to greater publicity.

Item: There is no way anyone could have escaped from the area in which the escapees were being held, according to Te and Saguisag. Thus, the escape was no escape. It was an exit done with the help of military authorities. The four needn't have announced that they had help from other soldiers; it was obvious. Their statement was clearly for psy-war purposes.

So now it must be obvious that the military is playing some deep games (unless they are just totally inept and confused). What kind of games, who the players are, what side they are on, and what the stakes are remain unclear. Either way, it is no wonder there is unrest and dissatisfaction

among the young officers and the rank and file.

But that does not let the Oakwood mutineers off the hook, much less the "escapees." Their statement entitled, "In Fulfillment of Our Sworn Duty," has to be one of the most graphic illustrations of the saying that patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels.

These renegades claim that they are defending the Filipino people (and therefore, by implication, they are patriots). And yet, how do they describe the Filipino people? These are people who "have been reduced to mere spectators" and masses "lulled into inaction and acquiescence." In other words, idiots who must be saved from themselves.

They say they "bolted" from the repression of a bogus regime. Well, "bolted" is about right, because one cannot call leaving from an open door an escape. But what repression are they talking about? And what bogus regime? It was not the civilian government that repressed them; the Makati trial court granted them bail. Any repression was committed by their superior officers in the military.

And yet they very carefully make no allusions to their superior officers as a bogus regime, probably because they are creatures of the "mistah" [military academy classmate] culture. So the bogus regime they refer to has to be the civilian administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, which they have judged (self-appointed) in behalf of an idiot people. Are they also saying that they launched their coup attempt in 2003 in anticipation of a bogus 2004 regime?

Spare me from these self-styled saviors. They are more like armed thugs who are drunk with power or the desire for it.

**They say they "bolted" from the repression of a bogus regime. Well, "bolted" is about right, because one cannot call leaving from an open door an escape.**



# SAMU'T SARI

The Emon Lodge No. 179, a local Masonic Lodge, and the MDX Amateur Radio Club spearheaded the CNMI JROTC-Community Services Project's "Trash-A-Thon" activity on Feb. 4, 2006. More than 200 JROTC cadet volunteers from Kagman High, Marianas High and Southern High Schools picked up trash on Beach Road, from the public beach in San Antonio to Paseo de Marianas in Garapan. These are pictures taken during this community activity.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lunch distribution for JROTC participants in formation.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, MDX's PRO Arnel Diesta, vice board chair Bong Malasarte, board director Raul Abordonado with JROTC cadets formation at the background.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sgt. King and Sgt. Gloria of Saipan Southern High and Marianas High with MDX members and JROTC cadets at the Minatchom Atchdao.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sgt. Ogo of Kagman High School with MDX's Raul Abordonado, Ed Reyes, Ramon Awit and some JROTC cadets at the ADA Sports Complex parking lot.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, MDX's Trixie Guevara, Jun Sison, Arnel Diesta, Bong Malasarte, Agot Morfe, Boyching, Lando Paspe and Romy Sison with JROTC cadets formation in the background.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Emon Lodge's immediate Past Master Jun Arce Jr. Deacon Pepe Crisostomo, Saipan Mayor's Office public information officer Antonio A. Benavente, Incumbent Master of Emon Lodge Danny Bañez, Lodge Secretary Romy Cayetano and Senior Warden Gener Garcia with the JROTC cadets.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## NMBA OFFICERS

The Northern Marianas Bartenders Association recently elected its new set of officers for this year. They are NMBA president Lito Espino, fourth from left; NMBA vice president Tom Alegre, right-most; and NMBA adviser Ramon Awit, second from right.

## SOUVENIR PHOTO

Northern Marianas Bartender Association president Lito Espino, left, and association adviser Ramon Awit pose for a souvenir photo.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO